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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000688

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STATE FOR DRL/MLGA - NOYES, IO/RHS - ROHN, EUR/AGS -  
SAINT-ANDRE

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA SUPPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ACTION ON  
ZIMBABWE

REF: STATE 33357

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) EconPolCouns delivered refetl demarche on March 19 to Austrian MFA Human Rights Director Engelbert Theuermann. Theuermann said Austria is only an observer at the UN Human Rights Council, but plays an active role. He said Austria has an embassy in Zimbabwe, and therefore has followed developments there closely.

¶2. (C) Theuermann said he agrees completely that the Human Rights Council needs to take action on Zimbabwe. He said the Austrian view was that Human Rights Council action would have to consist of an escalation of measures. An early presentation of a resolution text (which, Theuermann said, the UK had pressed the EU to support last Friday, March 16) could have a counter-productive effect if Zimbabwe is able to portray Western action as "neo-colonialism." The African Union statement on the situation in Zimbabwe is therefore very important, and it would be even better to have more African voices speak on the issue in Geneva.

¶3. (C) Theuermann said we need to take account of the relationship between our goals regarding Darfur and Zimbabwe in Geneva, even though this does not mean that we should be "shy" on Zimbabwe. The vote on Darfur is supposed to come on March 23, although Theuermann said he would not be surprised if it slipped into the following week. It is likely that we will have to address Darfur and Zimbabwe at the same time.

¶4. (C) The first step would be to raise Zimbabwe in Geneva whenever possible over the next few days. Theuermann said a means to do this would be to call for reports by special rapporteurs, and then ask about the situation in Zimbabwe in the course of their presentations. When the momentum builds up, we can call for a "proper discussion" of Zimbabwe. This will, in turn, give rise to the need for some sort of outcome. If there is no consensus for a president's statement, we can take action in another way -- possibly through a special session. This does not mean that a resolution is impossible -- only that there needs to be a build-up to a resolution.

¶5. (C) Theuermann said it would be critical for the U.S. -- "the real power" -- to engage in the lobbying effort bilaterally, especially with African countries. South Africa is a real problem, he said, adding that the weight of the U.S. is an important factor in overcoming South African obstructionism.  
McCaw